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## Peace-Building in South Asia: A Need for Third Party Mediation

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Since their inception in August 1947, India and Pakistan have been witnessing a perpetual state of hatred and animosity. Although both states have made several efforts for peace-building, and as a result, have signed several peace agreements, which have not only proved short-lived, but also failed to establish long-lasting and durable peace in the region. The paper argues that since India and Pakistan have failed to resolve their disputes through bilateral means, they need to give a chance to the third party mediation. It is also argued that after the 9/11 incident, the American interests and influence have increased in the region. Therefore, it is emphasized that both India and Pakistan need to settle down their political disputes by taking the advantage of the US presence in the region, and enhance economic cooperation as well as curb terrorism by showing political will and determination in order to provide a safe and secure future to their respective nations.

**Key Words:** Peace process, India-Pakistan relations, Mediation, Kashmir, US-led Global War on Terror, SAARC

## Introduction

For the last sixty years or so, India and Pakistan have been locked into several conflicts, which have engulfed most of the resources of the region and still have the capability to absorb the rest. Although several efforts, both at the governmental and non-governmental levels, have been made to resolve those conflicts, the region has so far failed to observe a durable and long-lasting peace. Although the 'Cricket Diplomacy' between the two countries at the time of the Cricket World Cup, held in India in February-March 2011, has helped melt the ice, the normalization of relations between the two nuclear-armed neighboring countries of South Asia are still in the transitional phase and can only become normal if the long-standing element of mistrust, which developed after their inception in August 1947, is removed.

The current thaw in relations between India and Pakistan needs to be noticed for several reasons. First, a realization occurred on both sides of the border that a continued brinkmanship may escalate into a full-fledged war. India and Pakistan are the only nuclear neighbors, which are involved in active conflict with each other. The Kashmir issue has become a nuclear flashpoint between the two states. The world narrowly escaped the nuclear disaster when both the states had deployed over a million troops on borders during the crisis after the attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001. Second, the keen interest of the US in the South Asian affairs has also put pressure on both India and Pakistan to work for peace-building in the region. It must be noted that for the success of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), peace between India and Pakistan is a prerequisite. After the 9/11 incident, Pakistan became the frontline ally of the US in the GWOT. Washington needed Islamabad's active support in counter-terrorism operations both in Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan. For this, normalization of India-Pakistan relations was necessary so that Islamabad could effectively concentrate on its western borders. Third, a realization has also occurred in both India and Pakistan that for the economic

growth and development, peace in the region is inevitable. The visits of Pakistan's and India's commerce ministers in September 2011 and February 2012 respectively could be a positive step in the right direction. Lastly, in case of Pakistan, the growing terrorism has deeply shattered the fabrics of the society. The militant Jihadi groups, which were previously nurtured by the Pakistani state, have now become too powerful to control. The blowback of the policy of using the Salafi/Jihadi groups in Afghanistan and Kashmir could be seen in the form of sectarian violence in Pakistan. Therefore, crackdown against those militant groups was the need of the time. This policy also met the Indian demand to dismantle terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan before the beginning of a meaningful dialogue between the two countries.

A significant change, which has occurred after 9/11, is that the US has now become an important regional actor in South Asia because of its physical presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Therefore, it is in no way that the US would remain uninvolved in case any crisis occurs between India and Pakistan. **Moreover, the US would no more bear Pakistan's policy of supporting militant Jihadi groups in Kashmir in order to engage India in a low-intensity conflict. It is argued that the US presence and role will determine the future course of India-Pakistan relations and so as the solution of disputes, including Kashmir, between them.** Two important factors support this argument. First, the US, today, enjoys a greater degree of influence on both India and Pakistan simultaneously. Second, a realization on the part of the US, India and Pakistan has occurred that the common threat to the regional as well as global peace and security is the menace of terrorism.

The paper is an attempt to analyze the prospects for peace between India and Pakistan as both the neighboring countries of South Asia have been witnessing the perpetual state of hatred and animosity for the last sixty years or so. The paper argues that whatever peace agreements signed between India and Pakistan have proved short-lived and failed to establish enduring peace in

the region. The paper further argues that since India and Pakistan have failed to resolve their disputes through bilateral means, mainly because of the rigid mistrust, the possible way out is to invite a third party in the dialogue process. Moreover, the focal point of the paper is that after the 9/11 incident, the American interests also require to play an active role for peace-building in South Asia, particularly between India and Pakistan, for the successful culmination of the GWOT.

The paper is divided into five parts. First part discusses the historical background of the relationship between India and Pakistan. Second part analyzes peace efforts between India and Pakistan and the failures of those efforts. Part three examines the post-9/11 scenario and its impact on Pakistan-India relations. This part further analyzes the composite dialogue process, Mumbai incident and its impact on India-Pakistan relations, and the current state of peace dialogue between the two countries. Part four evaluates the American engagement in the South Asian affairs. The last part analyzes the role of the US as a third party mediator and prospects for peace between the two giants of South Asia.

### The Genesis of India-Pakistan Relations

The partition of India in 1947 and as a result the creation of Pakistan on the basis of religion sowed the seeds of hatred and mistrust in relations between the two countries from the very beginning. **The Indian hawks did not accept the partition and "posited it as a great betrayal to Mother India."**<sup>1</sup> Even "some analysts attributed India's acceptance of Partition to its belief that **Pakistan would not last**"<sup>2</sup> and that **"Pakistan would collapse in a short time."**<sup>3</sup> The Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru himself admitted that "the question of Indo-Pakistani relationship was difficult to deal with because it was a psychological thing, resulting from the way the sub-continent was divided between India and Pakistan."<sup>4</sup> Similarly, then President of the Indian Congress Party, Acharya J.B. Kriplani, asserted, "Neither the Congress nor the nation has given up its claim of a united India."<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, both the nationalists and conservative Islamists along with the military in Pakistan saw India as an enemy, which was against their existence. Therefore, this enemy image on both sides of the border set the future direction of the relations between the two countries.

The unjust and delayed distribution of assets and territory further marked the increasing mistrust between India and Pakistan. Pakistan did not get the promised share of Rs. 750 million on time to run the nascent state machinery. Instead, it initially received only Rs. 200 million. It was only after Mr. Gandhi's hunger strike that put pressure on the Indian government and Pakistan received the sum of Rs. 500 million. The remaining sum of Rs. 50 million never came to Pakistan.<sup>6</sup>

The principle of 'communal majority' was applied to the partition of the Indian Sub-Continent. Under this principle, the contiguous Muslim majority areas were included in Pakistan, whereas the contiguous Hindu majority areas became the part of India. In legal terms, the June 3, 1947 Partition Plan did not apply on the princely states, which enjoyed semi-autonomous status under the British rule. With the lapse of the British rule, the princely states became completely independent and "were under no obligation to accede India or Pakistan."<sup>7</sup> The last moment change in the Partition Plan deprived Pakistan of the territory of Kashmir, a Muslim majority princely state ruled by a Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh. When faced with the tribal invasion, the Maharaja "invited the Indian army to repel the invaders – but India first demanded his accession, which he provided. Thus, Kashmir became the only Muslim majority state in India."<sup>8</sup> Since then Kashmir has been the bone of contention and the issue of continuous antagonism between the two countries, which have fought two major wars in 1948 and 1965, and a limited war in Kargil in 1999.

## India-Pakistan Peace Efforts and their Failures

Although several plans to resolve the Kashmir dispute have been discussed between the two countries under Track-I and Track-II diplomacy, both New Delhi and Islamabad are very firm on their principled stances: for India, Kashmir is its integral part, while Pakistan considers it as its lifeline. Moreover, one may also see the difference on the methodology to resolve the dispute: whereas India emphasizes on the bilateral negotiations between the two countries and rejects any third party mediation, Pakistan insists on the resolution of the dispute according to the UN resolutions, which call for the holding of plebiscite in Kashmir under the right of self-determination rule. These different and opposite approaches on Kashmir have not only complicated the situation between India and Pakistan, but have also diminished the prospects of the resolution of the dispute.

Having failed to resolve the Kashmir dispute through bilateral and multilateral negotiations, Islamabad then resorted to a strategy of engaging New Delhi in a low-intensity war in Kashmir. For this purpose, Pakistan extended its full support to the militant Jihadi groups fighting against the Indian troops in Kashmir. Although Pakistan continuously denied its role in Kashmir, it was disclosed during the Kargil incident in July 1999, when it was revealed that Pakistan-based militant groups along with regular forces participated in the operation. According to Strobe Talbott, "The United States condemned Pakistan's infiltration of armed intruders and went public with information that most of the seven hundred men who had crossed the Line of Control were attached to the Pakistani Army's 10<sup>th</sup> Corps."<sup>9</sup> Pakistan's engagement with the militant Jihadi groups and its involvement in the Kargil war further authenticated when the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, rushed to the US in July 1999 and sought American assistance to avert the crisis as well as to end Pakistan's isolation. On American facilitation, the crisis was averted.

After achieving nuclear capability in May 1998, Pakistan became confident that the low-intensity war strategy in Kashmir would bear fruits. It rather backfired. The Kargil war not only sabotaged the whole peace process, which was started after the visit of the Indian Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, to Pakistan and the signing of the Lahore Declaration in February 1999, but also put a dent on the Pakistan's credibility. The Declaration was the most prolific document in which the two governments committed to 'intensify efforts to resolve all issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir', to 'take immediate steps for reducing the risks of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, and the 'condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.'<sup>10</sup>

The region missed another opportunity to improve India-Pakistan relations when Pakistan's then President General Pervez Musharraf visited Agra in July 2001. Although both Musharraf and Vajpayee agreed to the basic fundamentals of the draft agreement<sup>11</sup>, it had fallen victim to the hard-line mindset of the Indian hawks, who did not want to see peace between the two neighboring countries. The man responsible for obstructing the agreement was then Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani. One of the Indian research journals, quoted by Pakistan's former Foreign Minister, Abdul Sattar in his book, dubbed Mr. Advani "the saboteur of Agra."<sup>12</sup> Musharraf also "blamed Advani for the failure of the [Agra] Summit."<sup>13</sup> Later on, Advani himself admitted "he had torpedoed the Summit."<sup>14</sup> Two months later, the 9/11 terrorist incident transformed the global as well as the regional politics of South Asia.

However, Pakistan's policy of supporting the militant Jihadis in the Indian Held Kashmir continued even after the 9/11 incident. Islamabad believed that since Washington badly needed its assistance in Afghanistan against the Al-Qaeda and Taliban, it would ignore its policy of engaging New Delhi in a low-intensity

war in Kashmir. Nevertheless, the policy proved to be ineffective and counter-productive with serious repercussions for Pakistan.

## India-Pakistan Relations in the aftermath of 9/11 incident

The 9/11 incident changed the overall international and regional political scenario in terms of renewed alliances to wage war against international terrorism. With reference to India-Pakistan relations, the immediate impact of the 9/11 incident could not be seen. The element of mistrust, which was created in Kargil, continued, though the success of the US-led GWOT was largely depended upon normalization of relations between India and Pakistan. Pakistan, which became the frontline ally of the US in the war against Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, continuously faced the Indian pressure to dismantle home-grown terrorist infrastructure. For this, New Delhi linked the cross-border terrorism with international terrorism. Consequently, India and Pakistan continued to remain at loggerheads and could not formulate a common strategy to counter the most pressing menace of terrorism.

## Attack on the Indian Parliament

India-Pakistan relations got further deteriorated when an **attack on the Indian parliament took place on December 13, 2001**. India accused Pakistan of its support to the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which was involved in that incident. To escalate pressure on Pakistan, the Vajpayee government took strict measures:

- a) **It massed its troops on the borders threatening an invasion across the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir or across the international borders;**
- b) **It demanded to hand over 20 people who were allegedly involved in terrorist activities in India;**



- c) It reduced the diplomatic representation in Pakistan; and
- d) It cut off rail, road and air links.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, India also demanded Pakistan to ban militant Jihadi organizations, which were involved in that attack. Realizing the tense situation on the borders, Musharraf in his address to the nation on January 12, 2002, vowed to take severe action against the Islamic extremist organizations. He not only condemned the terrorist act, but also vowed to take stern action against any Pakistani group found involved in terrorism in the name of Kashmir.<sup>16</sup> He announced a ban on Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), LeT, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Tehrik-e-Ja'afria Pakistan (TJP), and Tehrik Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM). Their offices were sealed in a nation-wide swoop. Also, their accounts were frozen and their activities in Afghanistan and Kashmir were halted.<sup>17</sup>

### Indian Peace offer

Although Musharraf's statement was a radical departure from the past policy of supporting Islamic militants in Kashmir, the normalization process did not take place until Vajpayee, during his address in Srinagar in April 2003, offered negotiations with Pakistan on all issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. In a conciliatory tone, Vajpayee said, "As Prime Minister of the country I wanted to have friendly relations with our neighbors and I went to Lahore, but it was returned with Kargil. We still continued and invited General Pervez Musharraf to Agra but again failed...We are again extending a hand of friendship but hands should be extended from both the sides. Both sides should decide to live together. We have everything which makes us to have good relations...No guns but only brotherhood can resolve the problems."<sup>18</sup> However, the Indian Prime Minister "did not specifically drop India's condition that Pakistan first to stop

militants crossing into occupied Kashmir before talks could begin."<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, Pakistan welcomed the Indian offer. The then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali said, "We welcome it, we appreciate it."<sup>20</sup> He further stated, "Pakistan has always said talks are the only way to resolve issues, including the Kashmir dispute... On the main issue (of Kashmir) Pakistan's stand remains the same. But once talks start there could be flexibility from both sides"<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Pakistan also announced a ceasefire on the Line of Control (LoC) and lifted the ban on the air service. Although both sides had realized the need of the dialogue process, they could not move forward and stuck to their old stances on the issue of Kashmir.

### Composite Dialogue: The Road to Peace?

In continuation of conducive environment, which developed with Vajpayee's offer of peace, the Composite Dialogue process started between India and Pakistan in January 2004. The Composite Dialogue consisted of eight baskets, which included: Kashmir, Peace and Security, Siachen, Wullar barrage, Sir Creek, Terrorism and Drug Trafficking, Economic Cooperation, and Promotion of friendly Exchanges.<sup>22</sup>

With the coming of Manmohan Singh in power in May 2004, the peace process continued with full realization that it would ultimately lead to sustained engagement and understanding between the two countries. Even Musharraf, despite domestic pressure from religious-political party, the Muttahida Majlis-i-Aml (United Action Front – MMA),<sup>23</sup> emphasized upon the out-of-box approach. In an interview to an American TV Channel on April 21, 2005, Musharraf floated an idea for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. He said, "The parts of Kashmir held by Pakistan and India separately can be divided geographically into seven parts."<sup>24</sup> He further said, "Either any specific portion of the Kashmir or its entire area could be declared non-military zone and later changing it statues afterwards."<sup>25</sup> After the earthquake in Pakistan on October 8, 2005, Musharraf also proposed the

opening of the LoC at five points.<sup>26</sup> The five crossing points across the LoC that the two sides agreed to open were: Nauseri-Tithwal; Chakoti-Uri; Hajipur-Uri; Rawalakot-Poonch and Tattapani-Mendhar.<sup>27</sup>

This was a tectonic shift in Pakistan's Kashmir policy. These proposals also enjoyed the consent of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), a representative organization of the Kashmiris. However, no major breakthrough on the materialization of those proposals took place because of the severe opposition from the Indian Army.<sup>28</sup> Under the Composite Dialogue process, four rounds of talks were held between the two foreign secretaries by July 2008.<sup>29</sup> Some major agreements, related to the CBMs, signed by the two countries were: the establishment of hot lines between foreign secretaries; an advance notification of missile tests; memorandum on not conducting nuclear tests, except under extra-ordinary circumstances; reducing risks from nuclear accidents; pre-notification of ballistic missile tests; beginning of Amritsar-Lahore, Lahore-Nankana Sahib and Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus services; operationalization of Khokhrapar-Munabhaio rail service; release of prisoners who had completed their sentences; opening of Sialkot-Jammu route and five other additional crossing points on the LoC; and agreement on trade between Pakistan- and Indian-held Kashmir.<sup>30</sup> Despite this, the peace process under the Composite Dialogue continued until it suffered a severe setback when Mumbai incident took place on November 26, 2008.

### The Mumbai Incident

The Mumbai incident completely changed the regional political scenario and brought the peace process between India and Pakistan to a standstill. The carnage, which continued for about three days, caused more than 150 deaths, both Indians and foreigners. Nine of ten militants had also been killed. Pakistan strongly condemned the incident and offered India its full support

and cooperation with the investigation. But mutual mistrust overshadowed all the efforts.

The Indian government attributed the attack to the LeT for perpetrating the terrorist activity. Initially Pakistan denied any connection of the LeT with the attack. However, later on, it acknowledged the only survived terrorist, Ajmal Kasab, was the citizen of Pakistan. This was acknowledged by then National Security Advisor of Pakistan, Major General (Retd.) Mahmud Ali Durrani. Speaking to an Indian TV channel, Durrani revealed that Ajmal Kasab was a Pakistani national.<sup>31</sup> Perturbed on this revelation, Yousuf Raza Gilani, then Prime Minister of Pakistan, sacked Mr. Durrani.<sup>32</sup>

According to Ilyas Khan, *BBC News* Correspondent, "India's position was vindicated when the Pakistani government later acknowledged that 'part' of the conspiracy to attack Mumbai did take place on its soil, and that Lashkar had been involved."<sup>33</sup> The Indian government, immediately after the Mumbai incident, demanded to handover the LeT Amir Hafiz Saeed, for masterminding the attack. Although Government of Pakistan detained Mr. Saeed under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Law, no criminal charges were brought against him.<sup>34</sup> The Lahore High Court released Mr. Saeed in June 2009, mentioning lack of evidence against him.<sup>35</sup>

The Mumbai incident has had serious consequences for India-Pakistan relations, and of course, the regional peace. First, the mistrust between the two countries reached to its height when in an interview with the CNN in November 2009, Manmohan Singh raised doubts over Pakistani civilian leadership's control over the military, compatibility of Pakistan's and US' objectives in Afghanistan, safety of the nuclear weapons and Pakistan's seriousness in bringing the perpetrators of the Mumbai incident to the justice.<sup>36</sup>

Second, the major casualty of the Mumbai carnage was the derailment of the 'Composite Dialogue' process between India and Pakistan. The talks at the foreign secretary level were cancelled. Although Pakistan, immediately after the incident, offered its assistance in joint investigation, India rejected it. The situation between the two countries got further tensed when the Pakistan military was put on 'high alert', particularly after "President Zardari received a threatening phone call purportedly made by Indian External Affairs Minister Mukherjee."<sup>37</sup> India, later on, denied it. It was also reported that "Indian air force units were [also] placed on alert for possible strikes on suspected terrorist camps inside Pakistan."<sup>38</sup> Despite a meeting between the two prime ministers in Sharm Al-Sheikh, Egypt, in July 2009, the Dialogue process could not resume. Although the Sharm Al-Sheikh meeting resulted in the beginning of talks, in February 2010, at the Secretary level, the talks failed because both the countries had different stances on the resumption of the Composite Dialogue: whereas Pakistan wanted to resume the whole process of the suspended Dialogue, the Indian side was very stubborn and emphasized upon that Pakistan should first tackle the issue of terrorism by taking action against the LeT and its leader Hafiz Saeed.<sup>39</sup>

Third, at the diplomatic front Pakistan faced a very awkward situation when the international community supported the Indian position. The US House of Representatives passed a resolution (H.Res. 1532) on December 8, 2010, "condemned the attacks, offered condolences and support to the people and government of India, and expressed US congressional desire to improve coordination between the United States and India to combat terrorism and advance international security. The resolution also called upon the Pakistani government to cooperate fully with India in bringing the culprits to justice and to prevent Pakistan's territory from serving as a safe-haven and training ground for terrorists."<sup>40</sup> Then British Prime Minister Gordon Brown in his condolence message to Manmohan Singh said, "These outrageous

attacks in Mumbai will be met with a vigorous response... UK stands solidly with [Indian] government as [it] respond, and to offer all necessary help."<sup>41</sup>

### Resumption of Dialogue Process

A ray of hope of establishing peace between India and Pakistan could be seen when prime ministers of the two countries **agreed to resume talks, during their meeting in Thimphu, Bhutan, at the sixteenth SAARC Summit conference in April 2010.** They agreed to restore trust and confidence, which was shattered after the Mumbai incident. Although both the countries **did not concede to the 'Composite Dialogue' process, they pledged to restore peace process.** While addressing the press conference after the prime ministers' meeting, the Indian Foreign Secretary, Nirupama Rao, made it clear that the dialogue process would not be under the 'Composite Dialogue'. She said, "We don't have to be stuck with nomenclatures. This does the relationship no good. Dialogue is the only way forward to open channels of communications and restore trust and confidence."<sup>42</sup> However, the positive sign of the Thimphu Summit was that it paved the way for the high-level dialogue process.

To advance the peace talks, foreign ministers of the two countries met in Islamabad in July 2010. **However, the dialogue process could not move forward because of "India's new claim that Pakistan's spy agency orchestrated the 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai."**<sup>43</sup> India's this claim came immediately after it was disclosed during the interrogation of David Coleman Headly, A Pakistani American, who was arrested in Chicago in 2009. This further underscored the element of mistrust and diminished the prospects of peace between the two nuclear-armed countries of South Asia.

The dormant peace process between the two countries once again got further impetus when Manmohan Singh in his address in March 2011 at a university in Jammu and Kashmir offered peace

talks to Pakistan. He said, "We wish to resolve all outstanding issues between the two countries through friendly dialogue and constructive and purposeful negotiations. This includes the issue of Jammu and Kashmir."<sup>44</sup> As a result, talks at the secretary level started. The dialogue at the secretary level remained successful and resulted in the signing of various agreements. For instance, the interior secretaries met in March 2011 in New Delhi. They agreed to the "sharing of real time intelligence to prevent terrorist attacks."<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the Commerce Secretaries of both the countries in their meeting on April 28, 2011, agreed to form various groups of experts to examine the feasibility of trading electricity and petroleum products, promotion of travel facilities and reducing customs duties on products of export interest of both countries.<sup>46</sup> Pakistan also agreed to grant India the Most Favored Nation (MFN) status.

Although the resumption of the dialogue between the two neighboring countries was a dire need particularly after the Mumbai incident, the element of mistrust has not yet reduced. India still doubts that Pakistan is not doing enough to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure, which causes cross-border terrorism. The militant Jihadi groups are still active in Kashmir. The Indian argument is that the peace process with Pakistan will not go forward until the latter ends its support for terrorist groups.<sup>47</sup>

In the presence of such a deep element of mistrust and the history of failed negotiations, it is argued that both India and Pakistan need to seek the help of the third party mediation in order to ensure a stable peace in the region. It is also argued that after the 9/11 incident the US has become an active extra-regional actor in South Asia. The American involvement as a third party mediator between India and Pakistan may help both the neighboring countries resolve their longstanding disputes, mainly Kashmir. It must be noted that the American engagement in the region is not a new phenomenon. It has played an active role not

only in averting various crises between India and Pakistan, but also bringing the two countries on the negotiation table.

#### The US Engagement in the South Asian affairs

During the Cold War period, the American role in the South Asian region could only be seen with reference to its relations with Pakistan. The major interest of the US was to counter the expansion of Communism in South and South-East Asia. Because of its unique strategic location, Pakistan was offered the membership of South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (Cento). Although one may see several ups and downs in the US' relations with Pakistan, India saw the former as an imperialist power and the latter being an agent of it. Therefore, the US, like Pakistan, could not lure India and its influence in the region during the Cold War period remained marginal.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and India's policy of economic liberalization in 1992 led to the establishment of favorable relations between Washington and New Delhi. However, it did not pave the way for an active American engagement in the South Asian affairs till the Kargil crisis took place in May-July 1999. It was the first armed confrontation between India and Pakistan after their nuclear tests in May 1998. The US not only condemned Pakistan, but also urged it "to respect the LoC and withdraw its forces across the LoC, while at the same time, urging India to restrain itself from crossing the LoC to open another front in the conflict."<sup>48</sup> The crisis was averted when Nawaz Sharif visited the US in July 1999 and sought American assistance. A meeting between Mr. Sharif and then American President, Bill Clinton, was held on July 4. Quoted by Rahul Chaudhury, "Amidst considerable American pressure, Sharif finally agreed to take concrete and immediate steps for the restoration of the LoC, which was accepted by Vajpayee when it was conveyed to him prior to its publicization."<sup>49</sup> It is a well-



known fact that it was an American facilitation which led to the formal end of the Kargil crisis.

The successful American facilitation during the Kargil crisis could not last long and the two nuclear states of South Asia once again faced a grim crisis when Pakistan-based Jihadi groups attacked the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001. India threatened to attack Pakistan. For the US, it was an unavoidable situation because of two reasons: First, India-Pakistan confrontation could disrupt the on-going military operations in Afghanistan under the GWOT. Second, the US could not afford India-Pakistan war, which might escalate into a nuclear one. The situation further became volatile when a terrorist attack occurred on an Indian Army garrison in Kaluchak, Jammu, on May 14, 2002. In order to reduce tension and bring India and Pakistan on the negotiating table and to pave the way for normalizing their relations after the attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001, the US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, visited South Asia in June 2002. Mr. Armitage's major focus was to put pressure on Pakistan to speed up its efforts to stop cross-border terrorism in Kashmir in order to satisfy India, which also accused Pakistan-based Jihadi groups of their involvement in the December 13, 2001, carnage. According to Rahul Chaudhury, Armitage visited Islamabad in June and met Musharraf, who "gave Armitage a commitment that he would end cross-border infiltration permanently."<sup>50</sup> India welcomed this move, and as a result, the ten-month long India-Pakistan confrontation successfully ended. It is interesting to note that the US was a driving force behind the beginning of the Composite Dialogue between India and Pakistan in January 2004.<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, during the Mumbai incident the US reaffirmed its commitment to curb terrorism in the region. According to the Congressional Research Service Report, "President-elect Obama had shown signs that reconciliation between India and Pakistan would be a key foreign policy goal of his administration in the

interests of both regional and Afghan stability, and to reduce the likelihood of attacks by religious extremists.<sup>52</sup> However, the US did not show any interest to help India and Pakistan resolve Kashmir dispute. The reason is that the US looks at South Asia from a broader spectrum, rather than specifically related to the issue of Kashmir, which may favor Pakistan and enrage India.

However, the US is worried about the growing militant activities of Pakistan-based Jihadi groups in Kashmir and other parts of India. It believes that the continued terrorist activities of the Pakistan-based militant Jihadi groups in Kashmir and other parts of India may bring the two nuclear neighbors to the brink of war, which will cause an unimaginable destruction not only to the region but the world at large. Besides this, the US also understands that it is necessary to close the militant theater in Kashmir so that the terrorists cannot use it for fresh recruitment.

It is a fact that the US would not remain unconcerned if any dangerous situation, which may sabotage its military operations in Afghanistan, arises between India and Pakistan. Although the US firmly believes that the success of war against international terrorism depends upon the friendly relations between India and Pakistan, it has so far failed to devise any effective mechanism to address and resolve the outstanding disputes, including the Kashmir issue, which is the primary cause of tension between Islamabad and New Delhi. The American efforts have been related only to easing tension and conflict management rather than conflict resolution between the two neighboring states of South Asia, with the history of tensions, crises and wars.

### American Mediation and Prospects of Peace

The 9/11 incident and as a result the launching of American-led military operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan has made the US a regional actor in the South Asian affairs. For the success of the GWOT, the US is very keen to see cordial, friendly and

tension-free relations between the two neighboring states of South Asia.

It is a fact that the rigid mistrust between India and Pakistan has impeded resolution of political disputes between the two countries. Since bilateral means to resolve disputes have proven ineffective, both India and Pakistan, by taking advantage of the US stakes in the region in the post-9/11 scenario, may seek its assistance to play the role of a third party mediator. Although India opposes any third party mediation in the bilateral talks with Pakistan, it must understand that without involving the third party, Islamabad would not be satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations. Both India and Pakistan need to bear in mind that this is high time to seek American assistance to resolve their political disputes and move forward in the direction of durable peace in the region. The matter of the fact is that once Afghanistan is politically stabilized and Al-Qaeda infrastructure is uprooted, the Americans would leave the region without any responsibility of cleaning the mess as it did in late 1980s after the Geneva Accords and left the region at the mercy of India-Pakistan rivalry. Had the 9/11 incident not taken place, the US would not have taken keen interest in this region. In other words, the 9/11 incident and as a result the American compulsion to depend on India and Pakistan for the successful launching of military operations, is a blessing in disguise.

On the part of the US, it is imperative to play the role of a third party mediator between India and Pakistan. The US must understand that the success of the GWOT largely depends on the joint cooperation of India and Pakistan. Moreover, taking advantage of its leading role in the GWOT, and Pakistan being its frontline ally, Washington needs to keep intense pressure on Islamabad to curtail its support for the militant Jihadi groups fighting in Kashmir who have their links with militant groups in Afghanistan. If Pakistan discontinues its support to the militant Jihadi groups, it will not only ease Indian concerns about

Pakistan's non-seriousness in dismantling terrorist infrastructure, but also ensure the success of American strategy to defeat the Al-Qaeda and associated groups, fighting in Afghanistan.

Similarly, the US, by taking advantage of its nuclear deal with India, can also pressure the latter to seriously work upon mending the fences with Pakistan. Moreover, the US must transform its role from an agent of conflict management to conflict resolution. In this regard, the support of the United States to the existing peace process between India and Pakistan is also necessary.

## Conclusion

The world has entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century with lots of hope and expectation of progress and prosperity. Unfortunately, South Asia continues to remain the least developed region with the expected 'destiny' of rampant corruption, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, economic fragility and political instability. The leadership of the respective countries has even failed to give its people any hope for a better future. The abysmal economic situation of the South Asian region can be seen from the fact that it "generates less than 2 per cent of world income, but it has 22 per cent of world's population, whereas 44 per cent of the world's poor live in this region."<sup>53</sup>

With huge natural and human resources, the South Asian region has a potential to progress at a rapid speed. The only thing which is lacking is the political will among the respective countries to take bold decisions to resolve inter-state disputes, which have hindered the prospects for peace in the region. The most important challenge for both India and Pakistan is how to continue and sustain the dialogue process, which could lead to the establishment of perpetual peace between the two belligerents.

Although both India and Pakistan have several times initiated talks on various contentious issues, including Kashmir, they failed to materialize them because of the deep element of mistrust. As a

result of their failed ventures, the extremist tendencies on both sides of the border have strengthened. These extremist tendencies have not only caused the rise of terrorism, but also marginalized the saner elements on both sides of the border.<sup>54</sup> It is, therefore, a high time to invite a third party for mediation in order to evolve a workable strategy for the resolution of the most pressing conflict, i.e., Kashmir, which has the potential to cause another war between India and Pakistan. In this regard, the US may be a suitable option because of its interests in the South Asian region in the wake of the GWOT.

However, before such mediation takes place, India, Pakistan and even the US, need to take few steps for the confidence-building measures. India needs to believe that a weak Pakistan is not in its interest. Being a big regional power, India has to play a leadership role and at the same time de-emphasizing upon being a hegemonic power of the region. If India wants long-lasting peace in the region, it has to alter its attitude towards its smaller neighbors, particularly Pakistan. This is a fact that a nuclear Pakistan cannot accept bullying from India, and New Delhi needs not to outstare Islamabad.

On the part of Pakistan, it has to shun the policy of engaging India in a low-intensity war in Kashmir by disassociating itself from the militant Jihadi groups. Failing to do so, may not only enrage India, but also disorient the US from engaging itself in the dialogue process.

Being the sole super power and an active extra-regional actor after the 9/11 incident, the US enjoys a greater leverage in South Asia than any other country in the world. It is in a position to pressure both India and Pakistan to make the existing peace process between the two countries meaningful and result-oriented. If this happens, the region will not only witness the economic prosperity, but also the resolution of political disputes, including Kashmir.

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